

defile the element fire, and they wore a covering over the mouth when they approached the fire for any purpose. Parings of the nails and cuttings of the hair were unclean. They would be weapons for demons if they were not covered by rites and spells. The menses of women were caused by the evil god Ahriman, A woman, during the period, was "unclean and possessed by the demon. She must be kept confined and apart from the faithful, whom her touch would defile, and from the fire, which her very look would injure. She was not allowed to eat as much as she wanted, as the strength which she might acquire would accrue to the fiends. Her food was not given to her from hand to hand, but passed to her from a distance in a long leaden spoon." At childbirth, the mother was unclean, in spite of the logic of the religion, according to which she should be pure because she has increased life. "The strength of old instincts overcame the drift of new principles." [The old mores were too strong for the new religion.] A woman who bears a dead child is a grave, and must be ritually purified as such. Only to save her from death can she drink water, which she would defile, and if it is given to her she must undergo a penalty. These views go back to the notion that she has been near death and has had the death fiend in her. A great fire is lighted to drive off the demons.¹ At this day there is in the house of a Parsee a room for the monthly seclusion of women. It is bare of all comforts and from it neither sun, moon, stars, fire, water, or sacred implements, nor any human being, can "be seen. The first ceremony performed on a newborn child is washing its hands, to purify it, since it also is unclean.²

562. Uncleanness amongst the Jews. Ritual uncleanness is represented in the Old Testament as due to contact with carcasses of unclean cattle and other unclean things ;⁸ to contact with a woman in childbirth, with a longer period if the infant is a girl than a boy.⁴ Care about clean and unclean things was praised as a high religious virtue,⁵ and the prophets used the distinction for the difference between virtue and vice.⁶ The food taboo is expressed by declaring forbidden animals unclean.⁷ Plague and leprosy are cases of ritual uncleanness, also issues.⁸ Distinctions of this kind (cleanness and uncleanness), enforced by ritual,

depend on clear facts of observation and prescribe simple acts. They include no dogmas. They prescribe things to be done. They produce notions and habits. They enter so deeply into ways of living that it takes long counter-education to eradicate them. The strength of the adherence to this distinction, in the rabbinical period, is well shown in the New Testament. 563. Uncleanliness amongst Greeks. The Greeks had similar conceptions of uncleanliness. Marriage was surrounded by rites of purification and

¹ Darmsteter, *Zend-Avesta* ^ xcii. ⁵ *Ibid.* x. 10; xi. 47.

³ Geiger, *Ostiran. Kultur*, 236, 259. ⁶ Isaiah vi 5 ; Ezek. xxxin. 17.

⁸ Levit. v. 2; xi. 26.

⁷ Levit. xi.

⁴ *Ibid.* xii.

⁸ *Ibid.* xiv, xv.